

A
SERMON

Preached at the
FUNERAL

Of that Faithful Minister of Christ
Mr. John Corbet.

With his True and Exemplary
CHARACTER.

By RICHARD BAXTER.

L O N D O N,

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A Funeral Sermon.

2 Cor. 12. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory : I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

I knew a man in Christ above fourteen year ago (whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

And I knew such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth)

How that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Of such an one will I glory ; yet of myself will I not glory, but in mine infirmities.

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool ; for I will say the truth : but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

And he said, My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

IT is but lately that we were here lamenting the loss of this City and the Church of God, in the removal of an excellent Saint ; we are now come on the like occasion. It is a year of Jubile for holy souls, and a harvest for heaven.

The ripeſt are gathered, and the green and ſowre fruit is yet left on earth: But Oh what a heavy judgement is it, to the needy world, which wants ſuch lights, as God is taking in. But we are not the Choofers! Its well if we be obedient Learners, and can follow ſuch to life in the Holy path.

The Text read to you hath ſo much matter of Inſtruction that will excuſe me if I ſcarce name the moſt. It is part of *Pauls* Vindication againſt the accuſers of his Perſon and Miniſtry, which were ſome Erroneous Judaizing Teachers. He confeſſeth that *glorying* is an *unexpedient* thing, and ſounds like folly; but yet in caſe of neceſſary defence, it may be modestly and ſincerely done: Eſpecially the opening of thoſe Divine Revelations and gifts which makes for the ſtrength of the Faith of others. The Explication ſhall be taken in as we go.

Obſerv. 1. *It is no new thing for the wiſeſt and holieſt of Chriſts Miniſters to be accuſed even by the Teachers of Chriſtianity.*

For 1. There are many Erroneous Teachers, that are confident they are in the right, and oppoſe the Teachers of Truth as if they were the erring men.

2. And there are Worldly, Proud, Malignant Hypocrites, who bring their unſanctified Hearts into the ſacred Office, and manage it as men do common Trades, but with greater enmity and ſtrife.

3. And there are abundance of ignorant or halfwiſe injudicious men, who have ſelf conceitedneſs enough to be peremptory and confident, but neither knowledge nor humility enough to perceive their own weakneſs and miſtakes.

Uſe. 1. Therefore let it not become a ſcandal to you if you hear ſome Teachers accuſing and vilifying others.

2. And think not that a Miniſter is erroneous or faulty, merely becauſe others, though of great name, do accuſe him, or ſo repreſent him. It hath ſtill been ſo, and while Satan is Satan, and man is Corrupt man, and there is ſo much darkneſs and ſo much Worldly Temptations, and Croſs Interests, it will be ſo: And Preachers will be made the common and dangerous hinderers of Preachers; And where they have Power will ſilence them, and diſgrace their work.

Obſerv. 2. *Glorying or boaſting is in it ſelf an inexpedient thing.* It favours of *Pride*, and *Selfiſhneſs*, and *Folly*, when it

it is not necessary and just. And therefore all Christians should be backward to it.

Observ. 3. Yet that which is so inexpedient, may on just occasions become good, and a duty.

That is, 1. When it is made needful to Gods honour, and the vindication and success of our Ministry and the Truth. And,

2. VVhen these are our true ends. And,

3. VVhen we speak nothing but the Truth.

Use. III. O that men knew how great a sin it is, by their confident Errors and rash Accusations, to put Christs Ministers upon such a defence; much more to seek their silence and destruction.

2. And here you see that *inconveniencies* will not excuse us from necessary duties; nor prove that all is unlawful which hath such. What is it in this confused and imperfect VVorld that hath not its *inconveniencies*? In Government, both *Monarchy*, *Aristocracy* and *Democracy*, absolute and limited, have their many *inconveniencies*. In Churches, the power of People and Pastors, equality and subordination, riches and poverty, severity and lenity; to use Discipline or neglect it, have their *inconveniencies*. In Worship, imposed words or free, and all humane forms and modes have their *inconveniencies*. In Houses, a married life and a single, to have Children and to have none, to have servants or none, to have much business or little, to be high or low, rich and poor, to rule greatly or severely, have all their *inconveniencies*. In our conversations to be yielding or not, to converse with few or many, with high or low, to speak or to be silent, have all their *inconveniencies*.

And yet there are men that on one side can silence Christs faithful Ministers by hundreds or thousands and persecute the true Members of Christ, and cast out true discipline, and corrupt the Churches, and justify all this by urging some *inconveniencies*. And there are others that can unchurch most Churches in the World, and separate from their Worship, and think the charge of *inconveniencies* will justify all. And so we should have no Government, no Ministry, no Worship, no Families, Wives or Children, or Servants, no Books, no Trades, no Food, no Physick, if all meer *inconveniencies* forbid them.

By

By this our instance *Solomon* may be understood, what it is to be *Wise* and *Righteous overmuch*, some are so *Wise* and *Righteous* (materially not formally) that they can find faults in all persons, all duties, all speeches, all actions, and on pretence of doing all better, would hinder us from doing what we can, and undo all as if it were for amending, not but that inconveniences may make actions sinful. But the great part of Christian prudence lyeth in holding the ballance, and trying wisely whether the good or hurt, the benefit or inconvenience do weigh down; We shall never Preach or Pray, nor converse with mankind without some inconvenience.

Observ. 4. *Divine Revelations acquainting the soul with Heaven, are matters most worthy of lawful, humble, modest Glorifying.*

It was *Pauls* Heavenly Visions which he gloried in as his advancement, when he had mentioned his many persecutions and sufferings in the way.

These tend to that perfection and felicity of souls: In these men have to do with the glorious *Jehovah*, the Angelical Choe, the heavenly Society, our glorified Head, our highest Hopes, and matter of the greatest everlasting joys. O if God would but give you and me this Heavenly sight, and let us but once see what *Paul* saw, what little things would Crowns and Lordships seem to us when we look down from such an height? What trifling should we think most of the busines of this world? what toys and dreams, their wealthy honour and sinful Delights. I should then say, Now I see what it is that we seek and hope and suffer for, what it is to enjoy God and our Redeemer: And therefore now I know, what it is to be a Believer, a Saint, a man indeed. O what a help to mortification would such a sight of Paradise be? How easily should we after resist temptations, deny the Flesh, condemn the world, and hate our sins. O how it would overcome all these distrustful trembling fears of death, and make us long, and grown and cry, to be with Christ? What life would it put into all holy duty? How easily should we bear our short afflictions? How would it mellow our fowre contentious minds toward one another, and teach us better whom to love and live in Peace with, than pride and Worldliness or Faction will teach us.

Fellow

Fellow Christians, Though you and I may not expect such Raptures, and Extasies as *Paul's*; yet we have the Gospel of Jesus, a Divine Revelation of this same heavenly glory; not to be set light by, because we see it not our selves, it is by the Son of God that saw it, and now is there preparing it for us; it is by a sealed certain word. And the heavenly beams are sent down from him upon our hearts, to shew it us and lead us up. VVe are capable of a lively beleif of the full assurance of hope, of the pledges, earnest, and first fruits; and of rejoycing with unspeakable glorying joy. We are capable in our manner, and are sure of traffick for heaven, and with heaven, of sending up our treasures, and there conversing in spirit as in the City which is our home, and hearing by Faith the joyful harmony of the heavenly Songs and Praises of *Jehovah*. Here we are capable of such a powerful touch with the Loadstone of Divine Love, or to have our Spirits so refined and sublimated, as shall make it as natural to them to make upward towards Christ, and long for full and perfect union. O had we lived as Beleivers should have lived, how much more of heavenly mindedness, and delight might we have attained than we have done? O thank God for the Gospel revelation, and beg grace to bring it in power on your hearts; And then, let worldlings take their earthly portion; VVe can spare them all that hindereth not the gathering and edification of the Church, and the heavenly interest of souls.

Observ. 5. *There is a third Heaven and Heavenly Paradise, where are the concerns and hopes of holy souls.*

Paul was thither taken up; had he no interest there, no hopes, no friends, no business there; VVhy then should he have been rapt up thither? *How many Heavens* there be, and why it is here called the *third*, I will not interrupt your more necessary thoughts, by conjecturing enquiries: Most say the *Air* is called the first, the *Starry Heaven* the second, and the place of the glorified Spirits, the third; but these are vain conjectures. No man knoweth how many there be, the Globes or Stars are at vast distance from each other, some great Philosophers have been tempted to think that VVorld is infinite as an adequate effect of infinite Power, because God hath no unactive power; All this is prophane rashness. The Heavens
which

which are our inheritance are the place where perfect Glorious Spirits shall live in blessed Society with Christ and one another; joyfully beholding the Glory of God, and feeling the delights of mutual Love; And yet there are different degrees of Glory from the different degrees of the Capacity of Spirits: Whether also from any difference in the place and communicating Causes, we shall shortly better know. There are more sorts of Spirits than we can now know. Though I know not how to receive *Aquinas's* Doctrine that no two Angels are of the same Species; the diversity as well as the incomprehensible Glory and Numbers, are unknown to us. Those that God employeth under Christ as his Pursuivants, Messengers, and Servants for his Church, are called Angels: Whether there be orders over orders quite above Angels, and how Angels differ from the perfected Spirits of the just, we know not.

As it is designed for Saints, its Glory consisteth,

1. In the Glory of the Place.
2. In the perfecting and glorifying the Nature and Persons that enjoy it.
3. In the Glory of the Heavenly Society, Christ, Angels and Saints.
4. In the Glory of their high and excellent work, to Love and Magnify God for ever.
5. In the Communication of the Joyful Love, and Light and Life of God, upon these glorified Spirits. O what doth every one of these words signify! Is not this a Paradise indeed, that is a place of purest greatest pleasure?

Use. 1. And are we not taught by such a glass as this, how Great and how Good a God we serve? O look up to the Heavens, and see what he is by that which he hath made. Yea, its said *Psal.* 113. 6. that he humbles himself to behold the things in *Heaven*, as well as upon earth. O sinners! what a God do you despise, neglect, and forget! and what a Heaven do you sell for fleshly lust, and to feed a Corruptible Body for the Grave! O Christians, what a God have we to serve and fear! and how Zealously and purely should we serve him! What a God have we to trust and hope in, and how great a sin is it to distrust him! What a Heaven have we to seek and hope for, and how chearfully and constantly should we do it. Alas, our cold

cold Hearts, and slothful Lives, and worldly Cares, and sinking Spirits, beseeem not such a God and Heaven. Were we designed but to inhabit the Sun, or some resplendent Star, how high is it above this Earth? Shall we creep only on Earth and feed on dust, and defile our Souls as if we were preparing them by Sin for Hell, when we have a *third heaven*, and *Paradise* to look up to, and seek and hope for?

Doth Satan say, *what is that to thee, that is so far above thee.* It is to us; it is the place where the Glory of God is which we seek; where our glorified Head is. The place of holy Spirits, whither also *Henoch* and *Elias* were Translated: where *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* live; whither Christs Spirit went at Death, and where he received the believing Thief; where *Lazarus* is in *Abraham's* bosom; which *Stephen* foresaw, and to which he was received. It is the place which we are set on Earth to seek; dearly purchased; surely promised; to which Gods Spirit is now preparing us: and of which it is our pledge and seal. Were it not for such an end and hope, how vain were Man, and what a dream this World. Take Heaven from us, and take our Lives, our Joyes, yea, more than many such lives as these: O that we could be more deeply sensible for what we are Christians, and for what we hope! what holy, patient, joyful Christians should we then be. But it is not a wavering Belief, a divided heart, and a few cold strange and staggering thoughts of Heaven, that will do this, as we desire it.

Observ. 6. *Souls are not so closely tyed to the body, but now they may be rapt up into Paradise, or the third Heavens.*

When *Paul* could not tell whether it was in the body or out of it, it sheweth some how the Soul was there, and that its possible it might be out of the body.

Obj. *If it were in the body, the body must go with it: If out of the body it must leave the body dead.*

Ans. It might be in the body and not take up the body: If man were born blind, the lucid Spirits, and visive faculty
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would act only within : But as soon as a Miracle opened his eyes, he would see as far as the Sun and Stars. And the Sun sends down its beams even to this Earth: Should God open this dark Lanthorn of the Body, we little know how far a Soul may see without any separation from the body : Did not *Stephen's* Soul in the body see Christ in Glory?

And if it went *out of the Body*, it followeth not that it must be separated from the body and leave it dead. When *London* was on fire, how high did the flame go above the fuel, and yet it was not separated from the fuel : A Soul can stay in the body, and yet not be confined to it as a Chicken in the Shell ; but may see, and mount above it to the Heavens.

Use. Therefore think not of Souls as you do of Bodies, which are Circumscribed in their proper places. We know not what formal thoughts to have of the *dimensions* or *locality* of Spirits : Somewhat such *eminenter* they have, (for they have *individuation* and *numeral quantity*, and some *passivity*) but not *formaliter* as gross bodies have : While the Soul is in the Body, it worketh on it, and is a Substance distinct from it, and such a *form* as hath also its *own form* ; even its formal Power or Virtue, of Vital Activity, Sensitive and Intellectual Perception, and Sensitive and Rational Appetite. It is *Active Life* it self, as the Principle : It perceiveth it self, and loveth it self, it understandeth what other Spirits are, by it self ; It remembereth innumerable things past : It riseth up to some knowledge of God. It can seek, love, and obey him, and all this though not *out* of the body yet *above* any *efficiency* of bodily Organs. O what a sad part of Mans Fall is it, to lose so much as the World hath done, of the knowledge of our selves. And to begin to know our selves, our souls, and how Man differs from a Beast, is the first part of recovering knowledge, leading up towards the knowledge of God, which is the highest.

O then, Sirs, do not only *own* the heavenly dignity of Souls, but *use* your Souls accordingly. Are they good for no better than to serve the Body in Lust and Appetite, and keep it in motion and some Pleasure, or at least from stinking a while in the World. Sinners, hear and consider, If you wilfully

willfully Condemn your own Souls to Beastiality, God will Condemn them to perpetual Misery. Yea, you do it your selves, and pass from brutishness to the *Devilish Nature and Woful State.*

Observ. 7. *The things of the Heavenly Paradise are to Mortal Men unutterable.*

That is,

1. *Such as cannot be uttered.* And,
2. *Such as must not be uttered.* It is not lawful to Paul that saw them.

Not that *nothing* of it may or must be uttered : Christ hath brought Life and Immortality to Light : They are great things and glorious which are by him revealed. Enough well believed and used to overcome the Temptation of this Flesh and World, and to raise us to a holy Life, and joyful Hope, and comfortable Sufferings and Death. Christ best knoweth the just measure of Revelation meet for Earth. Candles must serve for narrow and dark Rooms, and are more worth than all the Gold on Earth : The Sun by day must not come too near us lest it burn us up, but send us its beams at the distance that we can bear them. And all Souls are not here meet for the same measures ; Much less for that sight which the glorified enjoy. The *pure in heart* do see God, *Mat.* 5. and even *here* more than impure Souls.

1. There is no humane Language that hath words fit to reveal that part of the heavenly things which God hath shut up from us as his secrets. Mans words are only fitted to Mans Use and to Mans Concerns, and not to Angels and the secrets of Heaven : We speak not a Word of God himself, which signifieth formally what God is, but only analogically or by similitude, and yet not in vain. Paul saw, and holy Souls see, that which no humane Language can properly express.

2. And if it could, yet mortals could not *understand* it : No more than a Language which they never heard.

3. And Paul had it revealed in a manner suited to his own use, and not in a manner meet for Communication.

2. And it was unlawful also to utter it. For God saw not all that meet for the dark world of undisposed sinners, which was allowed to one eminent Saint.

2. Nor would he have so much more revealed by a Minister than the son of God from heaven, had himself before revealed.

3. And the revelation is to be suited to the fruition. Full knowledge is fit only for those that must fully enjoy it.

Use. Therefore remember with what measures of heavenly knowledge, we must be here content, so much as Christ hath revealed and is suitable to a distant life of Faith. I have known some that have run into greater calamities than I will mention, by an expectation of visible Communion with Angels; and others by rash conceits of Visions, Dreams and Prophetical Revelations: But the common Errour of Christians is, to content themselves with a feeble Faith (or at least get no better) and then think it should be made up by somewhat like to sight or corporal sense, and to be unsatisfied because they know no more than by believing they can reach to: As if believing were but an uncertain apprehension, (with which we are unsatisfied) and we are not content to live on that which God hath revealed, but we would fain know more, before we are ready for it; whereas we must *explicitly* believe all that is *explicitly* revealed, and *implicitly* believe and trust God for the rest.

We are here used to live by sight and sense, and the soul is strange to such apprehensions as are quite above sense and without it. And fain we would have God bring down the unseen things to these sensations and perceptions: And we would fain have distinct and formal knowledge, of that which God hath but generally revealed. It is somewhat excusable for a soul to desire this, as it is the state of perfection to which we do aspire. But it is not well that we remember not more that sight and full fruition are reserved together for the life to come; and that we live no more thankfully and joyfully on so much as we may in the body by believing know.

Quest. *What may we conjecture those things are which Paul had seen and must not utter?*

VVhy

Why should we enquire, when they must not be uttered? We may mention a possibility to rebuke our bold unquiet thoughts.

Our souls would fain have not only *Analogical*, but *formal* conceptions of the essence, substance, glory, immensity, eternity of God. Hope for much in heaven (but never for an adequate comprehension) But this is the very highest of all those things which are not to be uttered, and therefore not to be here attain'd.

Our souls would fain be perfect extensively and intensively in Philosophy, and know Heaven and Earth, the Sphaeres, or Orbs, or Vortices; the magnitudes, number, distances, motions, and the nature of all the Stars, and the Compagination of the whole frame of Being. But this is unutterable, and not here to be known.

Our souls would fain know more of the Angelical nature; what such Spirits are, whether absolutely immaterial as meer acts and virtues; or substances which are pure matter, and what their number and differences are, and how vast and many and distant their habitations, and what are their offices on Earth or elsewhere; and how much they know of us and our affairs, and in what subordination Men, Churches and Kingdoms stand to them, and they to one another, and how they are individuated, and how farre one: But all these are unutterable, and lockt up from us.

Our souls would fain know whether there was any VWorld before this Earth, and the Creation of the six dayes; and whether there was any spiritual Being, which was an eternal effect by emanation from an eternal Cause, as Light from the Sun: And whether the Sun, and Stars are intellectual or sensitive, and exceed man in form as well as in matter, and what the noble nature of fire is. But these things are unutterable and so not knowable to us.

Our souls would fain have more sensible perceptions of themselves, as to their substance, and their separate *Stars*? Whether they are substances utterly immaterial, how they are generated? How they subsist, and act out of the body? And how they do enjoy? How they are indivuate, and yet how far one? How far one or not one with Christ, and one another? Whether

ther they are divisible in substance as continued quantities, as well as in number as *quantitates discrete*: What place and limits do confine them (being not infinite)? How far they have still sensation? And how they see, Praise and enjoy God? And how they converse with one another? And how farre they know the things on Earth? And how their state before the Resurrection differs from what it will be after? And how far the soul will be instrumental in the raising of the Body: But all these are unutterable things.

We would fain know more of the decrees of God, and how all his acts are Eternal, and yet produce their effects in time? How they are many, and yet but one, producing divers and contrary effects. Many such things inquisitive nature would fain know which are unutterable.

But this must satisfie us.

1. That sinful souls, and dark, in a dark body, and a dark World, are not fit for so great a Light, nor capable of it; It will put out our eyes to gaze so neerly on the Sun.

2. That Christ hath revealed so much of the greatness and certainty of the heavenly glory, as he seeth meet and suitable to Gods holy ends and us.

3. That the Church hath so much clearer a revelation than the Heathen and Infidel World, as should make us thankful for our Light.

4. That if we believe the revelation of the Gospel soundly, we may live a holy joyful life, and die in the Peace and Triumph of our hopes.

5. That it is not by sight, but by Faith that we must here live, in our VVildernefs expectant state.

6. That the more we cleave to God, and live by Faith above the Flesh and World whilst we are in it, the clearer and sweeter our apprehensions of heaven will be.

7. That God must be trusted implicitly about that which is yet unknown to us, as well as explicitly for what we know. And,

8. That what we know not now, we shall know hereafter and the day is neer. Let these things quiet our souls in health and sickness, though we are yet in darkness as to the unutterable things.

9. And

9. And always adde, that *what we know not, Christ knoweth for us*, to whom it belongeth to prepare the place for us, and us for it, and to receive us. Had we but a Friend in heaven whom we could trust, we could partly, take up with their knowledge. Our head is there, and the Eyes that we must trust to are in our Head.

But how was *Paul* in danger of being exalted above measure, by the abundance of Revelations?

Answer, 1. It might have been above the measure meet for man in *Flesh*, and so unsuitable to his present state.

2. It might have been unto sinful *Pride*, as the Angels fell from God, and as *Adam* fell, desiring to be as a God in knowledge.

Observ. 8. *Even Heavenly Revelations may be made the matter and occasion of unmeet and sinful Exaltation.*

For, 1. It is the nature of sin to turn all our objects into it self to feed it. Not as they are without us *in esse reali*, but within us *in esse cognito*, the idea's in our minds. *Austin* saith indeed, that *Grace* is that *quo nemo male utitur*, but he must mean it. 1. As in it self. 2. And efficiently, *Grace* never doth evil. But objectively in the *Idea* or remembrance of it, it may be abused to pride.

2. And the greatest and most excellent objects as ours, give *Pride* the greatest advantage. Heavenly Revelations are far more excellent than *Gold*, and *Dominion* and *Worldly Pomp*. Children are proud of fine Cloths, and *Worldly* fools of *Vain-glory*; but *Saints* may be more tempted to be proud of *Wisdom*, *Holiness* and things above the reach of others.

3. And *Satan* knoweth how to fetch Temptations from the Highest, Best, and Holiest things: And his Malice being as much against them as against us, he will be here most malignantly industrious.

Use. We see then that *Pride* is such a sin, as the holiest *Saint* is not fully secured from, no not when he hath been hearing utterance.

utterable words, and seeing the Heavenly Paradise it self: No not if he came down from the third Heavens, (and bring his imperfect Nature with him) Though he came newly from Converse with Angels; Much more when he cometh from the most fervent Prayers, or holiest Meditations, or most heavenly and successful studies, and from hearing the most Seraphick Preacher, or Preaching as such an one himself: He is not out of danger, when he newly cometh from the most Self-denying acts of Mortification, or the greatest Victory against Temptation, or the greatest Suffering for Christ. VVhat a sad description do *Cyprian* and *Epiphanius* make of the miscarriages of some Confessours that had offered to die for Christ.

Let none therefore abuse the Grace of Christ, and the Doctrine of perseverance, by thinking that it sets him above all danger or fears of falling, unless he can say that he is better than *Paul* was, and hath seen and heard more than he did in Paradise, or than *Peter* did with Christ, and *Moses* and *Elias* on the Holy Mount. O that this Age did not loudly tell us, how much the real or supposed knowledge of Divine things, may be abused to sinful Exaltations! By one side, even by most famed Teachers, to contempt of others, and Lording it over the Heritage of God, and wracking and rending his Church by their needless, yea wicked convulsive imposing devices. And by the other side, by hurtful unwarrantable Censures and Separations, and speaking evil of the things which they know not. Have you heard and seen more of heaven than others? Be then more Holy, Loving, Merciful and Peaceable, and liker those in Heaven than others: Read over and over *Jam. 3.* shew out of a good Conversation your works with meekness of wisdom: For the wisdom from above neither befriendeth Enmity to *Piety* or *Peace*, but is first pure, then peaceable, &c.

But how is *Paul* kept from being exalted above measure? *God gave him a thorn in the flesh.* Note,

Observ. 9. *God seeth our danger when we see not our own, and saveth us from that which we saw not, or had not else prevented.* Thanks to him, and not to us.

But

But how doth God do it? By a Thorn *in the Flesh*.

Observ. 10. *It is better that the flesh smart, than the soul be overmuch exalted.*

No pain or suffering of the Flesh is so bad as Pride, nor hath so bad effects.

Use. Why then do we so little fear Exaltation. How greedily do some Religious People desire it? How impatient of any thing that crosseth it and humbleth them: How little do they lament it and confess it. Is Pride so rare or so small a sin? even among Preachers and zealous men.

And why do we so much fear every Thorn in the Flesh: Every Sickness, Pain, or Cross, as if Pride could be prevented or killed at too dear a rate? And why do we quarrel with God for our sufferings as if our Disease were not so bad as his Remedy. Who ever heard you in health cry out of your Pride, as in Sickness you do of your Pain. It's a happy Thorn which lets out this corrupt and pestilent blood.

But what was this Thorn in the Flesh of *Paul*.

Ans. The Greek word signifieth a *sharp stake, Pale, nail, stub, or Thorn*, or any such sharp thing that runs into the flesh, as it falls out with barefoot Travellers among such Thorns and Stubs.

Its strange how many Expositors came to take up that injurious conceit that it was *fleshy lust*; which hath not the least colour in the Text.

1. *Lust* wou'd be rather likened to a *Fire or Itch*, than to a *Thorn*.

2. It would be called an *alluring* rather than a *buffeting*.

3. *Paul* had a *Life of Labour and Suffering*, which would keep down *fleshy Lust*.

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4. This

4. This *Thorn* is *given him*, as sent from *God* to save him from sin; But where is *God* said to give men *lust* to save them from *Pride*.

5. This *Thorn* was the buffeting of a *Messenger* of *Satan*. But it is not like, that *Satan* could so excite *Lust* in *Paul*.

6. *Paul* prayeth thrice that it might be taken from him: It is not like that *Satan* could so follow him with *Lustful* motions; and that *Paul* would not have mentioned fasting and other means of *Cure*.

7. *God* doth not yet say that he will yet take it from him, but under his *weakness* manifest his *sustaining Grace*: which sounds not like an answer of a *Prayer* against *Lust*.

8. *Paul* is vindicating his *Ministry* against *Accusers*, by mentioning his *Infirmities*, that is, his bodily *Sufferings* and his *Revelations*; and is the telling them of his *Lust* a meet means for this?

9. It is called his *weakness*; which is his usual *Title* for his *Sufferings*; but you may see *Rom. 7.* that he calleth *Lust* by more odious names.

I doubt not but it was some bodily *Suffering* which was this *Thorn*, but whether by *Persecutors* or by a *Disease* is the chief doubt: Many think that it was by *Persecution*.

1. Because it was by a *Messenger* of *Satan*.

2. Because wicked men are in *Scripture* likened to *Thorns*.

I more encline to think it was a fit of some violent pain in the flesh, and most likely the *stone* (or some such thing) which indeed is a *Tormenting Thorn* in the flesh. For

1. We read of his frequent *Persecutions*, but never that he so named them, or that he so much prayed against them, but rejoiced.

rejoyced; as Christ bids such, with exceeding joy? *Mat. 5. 11, 12.* And when he and all the Apostles so much exhort Believers to rejoyce in such Sufferings for Christ, is it like he would here tell men how he prayed against it?

And as to the Reasons for the contrary sense,

1. VVicked men are called *Thorns* as *hurtful*, and so are other hurting things. Christ had a Crown of Thorns on his head, *Job. 19. 5.* and *Paul* must feel one in his Flesh. *Job 41. 2. Prov. 26. 9. & 22. 5. Hos. 2. 6. & 9. 6.* Any thing hurtful is likened to Thorns.

2. And Satan is in Scripture usually mentioned as Gods Executioner, even in trying his Children. It was into his hands that *Job* was put: Hurting work is fittest for an evil and destroying Angel. He would sift the Apostles as wheat, by outward affrighting as well as inward Tempting. However suffering it was.

Observ. 10. *A Thorn in the Flesh is one of Gods means to keep the best from being overmuch exalted.*

You have heard that the best may need it;

1. And the *Flesh* hath so much hand in our sin, that it is fit to bear its part of suffering.

2. And it is the most ignoble part, and therefore its suffering hath less of hurt, and less to signify Gods displeasure. Soul sufferings are the sore sufferings. And it is the Soul that is the chief Agent in our Duties; and therefore where it is spared we are least disabled for Gods work, and our Communion with him.

3. And the nearness of Body and Soul is such, that God

can use the Body to keep the Soul in a humble, and a safe Condition.

Use. Mistake not the Nature and meaning of the Flesh's sufferings. Grudge not at God; if he exercise thus his greatest Saints: Wonder not if the best men have sharp persecutions, pinching wants, and painful sickness, a long and sharp-tormenting stone, or other such like Thorn in the Flesh.

1. It is but the Flesh; in our Brutish part; common to Beasts: If Flesh must die and rot, why may it not first feel the Thorn.

2. We grudge not at that health and youth and ease and pleasure of it, which was the danger and temptation to the Soul, why then should we grudge at the pain which tendeth to our Cure.

3. If you feel not the need of suffering, you know not your selves: Did you know your Pride, and overmuch Love of Flesh and Ease, you would say that Pain is a Physick which you need, were it but to help on your willingness to die.

4. Pain here depriveth us of none of our true Felicity; it hindereth not Gods love to us; it keeps us not from Heaven: *Lazarus* was in a fairer way than *Dives*. It takes nothing from us, but what we Covenanted to forsake for Christ.

5. Do we not find that we are better when we suffer than when we are high? Were Religious People better when Victories and Successes did lift them up than they have been in their sufferings. Did they live then more humbly, peaceably and heavenly?

6. The *Thorn* will soon be taken out; Flesh will not endure long and therefore this pain will not be long; a few more painful Nights and Days, and the Porter which we fear, will break open our Prison Doors, and end these weary grievous sufferings.

Use. 2.

Use. 2. And think not the Thorn is a mark that such are worse than others. *Paul* was not worse ; and shall we Censure such as he.

Use. 3. But let us all know the use of suffering, what cure hath this Medicine wrought ? Blessed be our wise and gracious Physician, we find it a powerful though unpleasant Remedy. It keepeth *Lazarus* from the sins of *Dives* ; from living a worldly sensual Life ; and loving the prosperity of the flesh instead of heavenly true felicity : It keepeth us from a beastly living to our appetites and lust ; which would divert and deprave the spiritual appetite : It keepeth us from being deluded by worldly flatteries, and looking for a portion in this Life, and laying up a Treasure on Earth, and from growing senseless and impenitent in Sin. It awakeneth the Soul to serious expectations of Eternity, and keepeth us as within the sight or hearing of another World, and tells us to the quick that we must make ready to Die, and to be judged, and that we have much more to do with God than with man, and for Heaven than Earth ; It taketh down Pride, and all excessive respects to humane approbation, and keeping us still in the sight of the Grave, doth tell us what mans body is, *Mors sola fatetur. Quantula sunt hominum Corpuscula*, Juv. What faithful Soul that hath been bred up in the School of afflictions, doth not by experience say that it was good for him ? How Dull, how Proud, how worldly might we else have been, and trifled away our lives in sloth and vanity.

And it is not for nothing that our Thorns (or Nails) in the Flesh are kin to the Nails that pierced our Saviour on the Cross, and that we tread in his steps, and as Cross-bearers are thus far conformable to his sufferings.

Be patient than under the Pain, and careful to improve it, and thankful for the Profit. And let not the Soul too much condole the flesh, as if it had not at hand a better Habitation and Interest. It is but this *Vile body*, *Phil. 3. 19.* lent us for a little time, as our Clothes till Night, or as our Horse in a Journey ; when we have done with them, be content of Gods separation ; and till then let us not take our Corrector for our
Enemy

Enemy. I groan too much, Lord, I complain too much, I fear too much : but my Soul doth acknowledge the Justice and Love and Wisdom of thy dealings, and looketh that this Thorn should bring forth sweet and happy fruit, and that all the Nails of my Cross being sanctified by the blood of my Crucified Redeemer should tend to make me partaker of thy Holiness.

But who put this Thorn into *Pauls* Flesh ? It was one of Satans Messengers.

Observ. 11. The sufferings of the holiest persons in the flesh, may be the buffetings of a Messenger of Satan.

No wonder ! He that hath got somewhat of his own in us all, desiring us with sin, if he also may answerably be permitted to afflict us : He possessed many in Christs time, and it was Devils that made them dumb, and deaf, and mad ; whom Christ at once delivered from Devils and Diseases. He is called the *Accuser* and *destroyer*, and he that *had the power of Death*, Heb. 2. 14. whom Christ by Death and Resurrection Conquered. Christ calleth his healing the *Palsie man*, the *forgiving of his sin* ; and *James* saith, upon Prayer and Anointing, the sick should be healed, and *his sins forgiven*. And for the Cause of sin, many Christians were sick and weak, and many fallen asleep. I cannot say that Good Angels may not hurt men, and execute Gods Judgments ; but Scripture maketh evil ones his ordinary Executioners.

Use. Therefore it is no proof that a man is not a Child of God, though the Devil have permission to Torment his Flesh, Rev. 2. 10. The Devil shall cast some of you into Prison.

Please God, and Satan hath no Power ; and Christ will take care out the Thorn ere long, which Satan is permitted to put in.

But how doth *Paul* endure the Thorn ? He prayeth that it might depart from him.

Observ. 12. The best men are sensible of the suffering of the Flesh, and may pray God to take it from them.

Grace

Grace doth not make the Flesh insensible; Nor separate the Soul from it, though it set us above it; nor make us despise it, though it shew us a higher Interest and better Habitation, and teach us to bear the Cross, and resign the Body to the Will of God. A Godly man may groan under his Pain, and take it as a fruit of sin, and an act of the Chastizing Justice of an offended Father, and pray against it as hurtful, though not as a Remedy. They that ignorantly dispute that because Christ hath suffered all our Punishment; therefore there is no Penal hurt in Pain or Death, confuse themselves if they complain under it, or pray against it, or desire such Prayers from the Church or any. Yea, one use of the *Thorn* is to awaken and quicken us to Prayer: Like *Jonas's Storm*.

Use. Go then to God in all affliction, but not with carnal discouraged hearts. He maketh you thus feel the need of his Mercy, that you may with the Prodigal think of home and cry for Mercy, and abuse it no more. Christ did not blame the blind and lame for crying out, *Jesou, thou Son of David have mercy on us*. Nor the Canaanite Woman for begging for the Crums; is any afflicted let him pray, and send for the Elders Prayers. The *Thorn* in the Flesh will make us feel; and feeling will teach us to repent and pray, and prayer is the means of hope for the deliverance of Body and Soul. Grace maketh us not stupid, yet there are some that think a man behaveth not himself like a Believer if he cry and pray that the *Thorn* may depart! What think they of *David*, in *Psal.* 6. and 17. and 88. And many more? What think they of Christ that prayed, that if possible the Cup might passe by him. He did it to shew that even innocent nature is averse to suffering, and death through Grace makes us submit to the Will of God; (we continue men when we are Believers, we must mourn with them that mourn, and yet not love others better than our selves; nor feel their *Thorns* more sensibly than our own. We must neither despise chastenings, nor faint.

But how doth *Paul* pray? Doth he make any great matter of his thornes, *He besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart*.

Observe.

Observ. 13. *Even earnest and oft Prayer is suitable to sharp Afflictions.*

There is a kind of Devils, and so of Satans *thornes*, which go not out but by fasting and prayer, no not by Christs own Apostles. The sense and means must be suited to the malady. God can do it upon one prayer, or upon none, but we are not so easily fited to receive it.

And *Paul* in this also is conformed to Christ, who in his Agony pray'd thrice against his Cup, though with submission.

Use. 1. You see here that the Apostles gift of healing, was not to be used at their own will, nor for their own flesh that it might not suffer; but for the confirmation of the Faith, when it pleased the Holy Spirit. *Troplimus* and *Epaphroditus* might be sick, and *Timothy* need a little *VVine* with his *VVa-ter*, though *Paul* had the gift of healing.

Use. 2. O let our pains drive us all to God, who hath not some? Sickneses are all abroad, what house, how few persons have not some; and yet is there a Prayerless house, or person? If Faith have not taught you to pray as Christians, methinks feeling should teach you to pray as men? I say not that prayer must shut out Food and Physick, but Food and Physick will not do, if prayer prevail not with the Lord of all.

Use. 3. And think not *thrice* or *continued* praying to be too much, or that importunity is in vain, *Luk. 18. 1. Christ spake a Parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not wax faint.* *VV*hether God deliver us, or not, prayer is not lost, it is a good posture for God to find us in, we may get better if we get not what we ask. Obey and Pray, and Trust God.

But what answer doth the Lord give to *Pauls* thrice praying. He said, *My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is manifested in weakness.*

1. It was not a promise that the *thorn should depart*.
2. It seems to be rather a denial at the present, and that *Paul* must not be yet cured of his thorn; for it is called a *weakness* that must continue for the manifesting of Gods strength: and what was the sufficiency of grace and strength for, but to endure and improve the thorn?
3. But this promised grace and strength is better than that which was desired.

Obs. 14. Even oft and earnest prayer of the greatest Saint, for deliverance from bodily pains, may not be granted in the kind, or thing desired.

For, 1. we are not Lords, but beggars, and must leave the issue to the donor. And God hath higher ends to accomplish, than our ease or deliverance. It's meet that he should first fit all his actions to his own will and glory, and next to the good of many, and to his publick works in the World; and then to look at our interest next.

2. And we are utterly unmeet judges of matter, manner, time or measure what God shou'd give us for the body, and how much, and how, and when. When should we be sick, or pained, or persecuted, or dye, if all our prayers must be absolutely granted. We know not how much better God is preparing us for by pain, and bringing us to by dismal death. He will not keep us from grace and glory because our flesh is loth to suffer, and to die.

3. And in this *Paul* also was conformed to Christ: He was heard in the thing that he feared, when in his agony he prayed with strong cries: but it was not by the removing of the bitter cup, but by divine strength and acceptance: And so it is with *Paul*; *sufficient grace and strength to bear*, is the thing promised.

Use 1. We see then that they are mistaken that think Christs promise of giving believers whatever they ask, will prove him a breaker of his promise, if the strongest believer receive not all that he asketh for the body. Was not *Paul* a strong believer? All that God hath promised, and we are fit to receive, God will be sure to give.

2. Let not unbelief get advantage by Gods not granting such prayers

prayers for the body. Say not, Why then is it my duty to pray ?
 1. You know not before-hand but God may give it. Possibility bids you beg. 2. Why did Christ pray against his Cup ? 3. You lose not prayer : you draw nearer God : you exercise repentance and desire : you signify your dependance : you are prepared for much greater gifts.

Obf. 15. When God will not take the thorn out of our flesh, and deliver us when we pray, from bodily sufferings, he will be sure to do better for prepared persons, even to give them his sufficient grace, and manifest his strength in their pain and weakness.

It is not for want of *Love* or *Power* that he lets us tumble on our beds in pain, or lie under slanderers or persecutors rage. He that with a word could make the World, with a word can save us from all this. But if we suffer not, how shall suffering-graces be exercised, faith, patience, self-denial, and hope ? Is not grace better than ease or life ? How shall we get the benefit of suffering, if we feel it not ? How shall grace and divine strength be manifested to our selves and others ?

Quest. What is it that Grace is sufficient for ?

Ans. 1. Not to set us up above the frailties of humanity and mortality ; nor to raise us to the joy that souls in heaven have.
 2. Not to every one alike, but in our several measures : some fear pain and death more than others : some have greater patience and joy, and long to depart and be with Christ.

But to all the faithful it shall suffice, 1. To keep them from revolting from Christ, and repenting of their choice and hope. 2. To save them from charging God foolishly, as if he did them wrong. 3. It shall keep them from damning despair. When Satan sifteth them, Christs intercession shall keep their faith from failing : Grace shall humble them, and save them from sin, and the flesh and world : they shall cast soul and body upon Christ, and trust him in hope in their several degrees. And those that have been more believing, heavenly and fruitful than the rest, are likest to have the greatest peace and comfort, especially in their greatest need.

Quest. And how is Gods strength manifested in our weakness ?

Ans. 1. It is manifested to our selves, by keeping us from sin,
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and sinking into despair, and enabling us to bear, and trust, and wait, and usually in the peace or joy of hope : We know we are insufficient for this our selves : When *flesh and heart*, as natural, fail us, God is the *strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever*, Psal. 73. 26. We do not think oft before that ever we can bear and overcome, as grace enableth us.

2. And it's manifest oft to others, who shall see that power of grace in the sufferings of believers, which they did not see in their prosperity.

Use. 1. Let not then our own weakness and insufficiency too, much distress us with fears of suffering and death ; yea, when we feel the thorn, let us not forget our help and strength. By *Grace* here is meant, the loving and merciful *help* of God, especially giving us the inward strength by which we may not only bear, but improve the sufferings of the flesh. This body was not made to be here incorruptible or immortal ; we were born in sin, and therefore born to pain and death. We have lived in sin, and no wonder if we live in sorrow : but the sufferings of our Redeemer have sanctified our sufferings. The Cross is not now such a cursed thing, as guilt had made it. He took our suffering-flesh and blood, that he might destroy by death, the devil that had the power of death, and deliver us who by the fear of death, were all our life-time subject to bondage, *Heb. 2. 14.* Our pain prepareth us for endless pleasures, and our sorrows for our Masters joy. When we have suffered with him, we shall reign with him : He liveth, and we shall live by him : He is risen, and we shall rise by him : He is in Glory, and we must be with him.

In the mean time his Grace is sufficient for us, not only in health and ease, but in all our pain and sickness : He is not so unskillful or unkind, as to give such physick to his own, which shall do them more harm than good. Though it be grievous at the present, it brings forth the quieting-fruit of righteousness : but we must first be exercised therein. Let us not then be his impatient patients : Grace can support us and overcome. Men are not sufficient : Our wit, our power, our worthiness are not sufficient : But God's grace is sufficient : If ease and life had been better than Grace and Glory, we might have had them : But God giveth us better than flesh would chuse. Though the body be weak, the head weak, the me-

more weak, the stomach weak, and all weak, yet God is strong, and his strength will support us, and bring us safe to our journey's end. *Lazarus* lay among dogs in weakness at the rich man's doors, but the Angels convey'd him in strength to *Abraham's* bosom. We must lie, and languish, and groan in weakness, but Omnipotence is engaged for us: We must die in weakness, but we shall be raised in power, by him who will change these vile bodies, and make them like to his glorious body, by the power by which he can subdue all things to himself, *Phil.* 3. 20, 21. Let us therefore *lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees*, *Heb.* 12. 12. Looking to Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the Cross.

And let us beg more for divine grace and strength, than for the departing of the thorn. Grace is better than ease and health. If the soul be our nobler part than the body, the health of it is more desirable. Bodily ease is common to brutes and wicked men: strength of Grace is proper to Saints: Ease and health in this life are short; but Holiness will be everlasting. Health fits us for fleshly pleasure, but Holiness for Communion with God. O pray not carnally, for the flesh more than for the spirit, for earth more than for heaven. Pray, that while the outward man is perishing, the inward man may be renewed day by day; and that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, may work for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the temporal things which are seen, but at the eternal things, which are unseen to us, *2 Cor.* 4. 16, 17, 18. Why should we grudge at any sufferings, which are for the glory of God's grace and strength: As Christ said of *Lazarus*, This sickness is not unto death (that is, the end of it is not to end his life, though he dye) but that the glory of God may be revealed. So pain and death are not God's ends, but the manifesting of his grace and strength.

But, alas, it is not only the flesh that is weak, but Grace it self, (as it is in us, though not as it is in God and of God); nor is it flesh only that hath the thorn, but the heart or conscience also hath its part. The spirit of a man (if sound and well) will sustain (his bodily) infirmities: *But a wounded spirit who can bear?* If faith were not weak, if hope, and love, and desire were not weak, the weakness of the body might well be born. If sin and guilt were no wound or thorn in the soul and conscience, we could be more
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indifferent as to the flesh, and almost as quietly bear our own pain and death, as our neighbours. Though it's hard to say *'s Tertullian Nihil erus sentit in nervo, cum animus est in cælo;* yet our content and joy would overcome the evil of our suffering. But, alas, when soul and body must be both at once lamented, this, this, is hardly born! Lord! seeing it is thy *sufficient Grace*, and not my bodily ease which I must trust to, and my weakness must manifest thy strength: O let not Grace also be in me insufficient and weak! O let not Faith be weak, nor Hope, nor Love, nor Heavenly desires and foretaste be weak! Nor Patience and Obedience weak! Head is weak, and heart is weak; but if Faith also be weak, what shall support us: At least let it be *unfeigned and effectual*, and attain its end, and never fail. Flesh is failing, and health (as to its proper strength) is failing. But be thou my God, the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. And what ever thorn the flesh must feel, yet let me finish my course with joy. *Amen.*

I have run over many things in a Text so suitable, that I could not well spare any of them. Those that well knew our Deceased friend, will say that except *Pauls* extraordinary rapture, and Apostolical privileges, in *Pauls* case I have been describing his.

I come not to gratify the interest of any of his Relations, to speak to you according to custom of a stranger whom I knew not; but for the honour of Gods grace, and our own edification, to tell you what I knew by my most faithful and familiar friend. It is almost forty years since I heard him preach in the City of Gloucester; there was his enterance, and there he lived (under a *Papist* Bishop of the Protestant Church, *Godfry Goodman*, as his last Testament in Print professed) there he abode during the Civil Wars, and wrote the History of what happened there. He was after removed to the City of *Chichester*, and from thence to *Bramshot* in *Hamshire*, and silenced with the rest, he was cast out, where he continued till 1662. He lived peaceably in *London* without gathering any Assembly for publick Preaching. Dwelling in *Totteridg* with Alderman *Web*, his great love drew him there, to remove to me, with whom a while he took up his habitation. In all the time that he was with me, I remember not that ever we differed once in any point of Doctrine, Worship, or Government Ecclesiastical or Civil, or that ever we had one displeasing word.

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The Kings Licenses encouraged his old flock at *Chichester* to invite him thither, though they had the help of another *Nonconformist* before, with whom he joined with love and concord. God many years afflicted him with the disease that was his death; while the pain was tolerable to nature, he endured it, and ceased not Preaching till a fortnight before he was carried up to *London* to have been cut. But before that could be done, in about a fortnight more he died. This is the short History of his course.

But I will next give you his true Character, and then tell you how like his case was to *Pauls* here in my Text, and then tell you to what use I do all this.

I. He was a man so blameless in all his Conversation, that I may say as I did here lately of another (*Alderman Ashurst*) that I never heard one person accuse or blame him, except for *Nonconformity*, and that difference from others in these divided times, which his Book expresses. Of which more anon.

II. Were it not that I have said we never differed, and so made my self an incompetent Judge, I should have said that I thought him a man of great clearness and soundness in Religion, much by the advantage of the calmness and considerateness of his mind.

III. He was of so great moderation and love of peace, that he hated all that was against it, and would have done any thing for concord in the Church, except sinning against God, and hazard-ing Salvation. In the matter of the five Articles, or *Arminianism*, he went the reconciling way, and I have seen a *Compendium* of his thoughts in a Manuscript, which is but the same with what I have delivered in my *Carb. Theol.* but better fitted to Readers that must have much in a few words.

He constantly at *Totteridge* joined in all the Worship with the Publick Assembly, and had no sinful separating Principles. He was for Catholick Union, and Communion of Saints, and for going no further from any Churches or Christians than they force us, or then they go from Christ. He then Preached only to such Neighbours as came into the house between the times of the Publick Worship. He was for loving and doing good to all, and living peaceably with all as far as was in his power. Something in *Episcopacy*,

pasy, Presbytery, and Independency, he liked, and some things he disliked in all; but with all sorts lived in love and peace, that did seek the furtherance of mens Salvation. Many parts of Conformity he could have yielded to, but not to all, nothing less than all would satisfie.

IV. In all he was true to his Conscience, and warpt not for a parties interest or faction. If all the *Nonconformists* in England had refused, he would have conformed alone, if the terms had been reduced to what he thought lawful. And he studied that with great impartiality.

V. He managed his Ministry with faithfulness and prudence: He took it for heinous Sacriledg to alienate himself from the Sacred office to which he was devoted, though men forbad it him: But he thought not the same circumstances of Ministration necessary to all times and places: He was not for open preaching to great numbers, when it was like by accident to do more hurt than good: Nor yet for forbearing it, when it was like to do more good than hurt. He spared not his flesh, but held on from year to year under his great pain of the Stone in the bladder, till within a month before he dyed. Much less would the prohibition of any restrain him, to whom God gave no such forbidding-power.

VI. He served God with self-denial, not with any selfish or worldly designs: He never lookt after preferment or riches, or any great matters in the world: He had daily bread, and was therewith content.

VII. He suffered his part in our common lot 1662. Aug. 22. (ejected and silenced with about 2800 more) with as little murmuring as any man that I knew: I never heard him dishonour the King, nor speak much against those by whom he suffered, or rip up their faulces, unless a rare and necessary self-defence be called an accusing them. I never heard him so much as complain how much Church-maintenance he was deprived of, nor of the difficulties of his low dejected case.

VIII. He

VIII. He was a great hater of that base pride and envy, which possesseth too many of the sacred office, who grudge if others be preferred before them; and if the people go from them to others for their greater edification, and think themselves wronged if they be not followed and applauded, either above, or equal with more worthy men: He was very careful to preserve the reputation of his brethren, and rejoiced in the success of their labours, as well as of his own, and a most careful avoider of all divisions, contentions, or offences. And he was very free in acknowledgings by whom he profited, and preferring others before himself.

IX. He was very much in the study of his own heart, by strict examination, as his Cabinet-papers, which may come to light, make known, as I had also occasion otherwise to know.

X. By this examination he was confidently assured of his own sincerity in the true love of God, and of holiness for it self, and such-like evidences which he wrote down, renewing his examination as occasion required. And though he had known what it was to be tempted to doubt of the life to come, he was fully settled against all such doubts and temptations.

XI. But though he had a settled assurance both of the truth of the Gospel, and the life to come, and of his own satisfaction and sincerity: yet so lively were his apprehensions of the greatness of his approaching change, and the weight of an everlasting state, and what it is to enter upon another world, that he was not without such fears, as in our frail condition here, poor mortals that are near death are lyable to. And indeed *fear* signifieth a belief of the word of God, and the life to come, much more than dull insensibility: But he signified his belief both by *fear* and *hope*, and strong assurance.

XII. He had the comfort of sensible growth in grace. He easily perceived a notable increase of his faith, and holiness, and heavenliness, and humility, and contempt of worldly vanity, especially of late years, and under his affliction, as the fruit of Gods correcting-rod.

I have

I have truly given you the description of the man, according to my familiar knowledge. I shall yet review the similitude of his case with this of *Paul* described in my Text.

I. *Paul* was accused by *envious, contentious Teachers*: And so was he; Though I never heard any one person else speak evil of him; as is said, They that upbraided not *Paul* with his former persecution, nor had any crime to charge him with, yet accused his Ministry: As they said of *Daniel*, *We shall find no fault against him, except it be concerning the law of his God.* His *Preaching* and *Writings*, though all for peace, were the matter of his accusations: The Bishop blamed him for Preaching, even when the King had licensed him: And a nameless Writer published a bloody Invektive against his *Pacificatory-book*, called *The Interest of England*, as if it had been written to raise a War. The enemies of Peace were his enemies.

II. He took boasting to be inexpedient, as *Paul* did: And when he was silenced as unworthy to be suffered in the Ministry, he once offered a modest defence to the Bishop, and wrote a short and peaceable account of his judgment about the sin of Schism, in his own Vindication.

III. He had (though not the Extasie of *Paul*, yet) great knowledge of things Divine and Heavenly to have been the matter of his glory.

IV. The heavenly Paradise was the place of his hopes, where he daily studied to lay up his treasure, which had his chiefest thoughts and care.

V. He found by experience that an immortal soul is not so tyed to this body of flesh, but that it can get above it, and all its interest and pleasure, and live on the hopes of unseen glory.

VI. As he knew the incapacity of mortals, to have formal and adequate conceptions of the state of the heavenly Paradise and separated souls; so he submitted to Gods-concealing Will, and lived on the measure of Gospel-revelation.

VII. He knew the danger of being *exalted above measure*, by occasion of holy Knowledge; and how apt man is to be so puffed up.

VIII. God himself saved him from that danger, by his humbling wholesome sharper remedy.

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IX. A *Thorn* in the flesh was Gods remedy to keep him in a serious humble frame : Three great Stones were found in his bladder, and one small one in a corrupted Kidney : And how painful a thorn these were for many years, it is easie to conjecture.

X. Satan was permitted to try him as *Job*, not only by the pain of his flesh, but also by reproaches, as aforesaid, and by casting him out of his Ministry, as unworthy to preach the Gospel of Christ, unless he would say, swear, and do all that was by men imposed, and the rest of those afflictions which are contained in such an ejected, impoverished, calumniated state, are described in the late and former experience of many such.

XI. Though I never heard him pray against poverty or reproach, yet for the liberty of his Ministry he did, that he might preach that Gospel of Salvation. And pain forced him to have recourse to God for deliverance from the *thorn* in his flesh. And if Christ and *Paul* prayed thrice with *earnestness*, no wonder if continued pain made him continue his suit to God.

XII. As Christ was heard in the thing which he feared, and yet must drink that cup : and *Paul* instead of the *departing* of the one, was promised *sufficient grace*, and the *manifesting of Gods strength* in his pain and weakness ; so it pleased not God to take away the *Thorn* from our dear Brothers flesh, but he did better for him, and gave him his supporting help, and an increase of grace, and shewed his own strength in all his weakness ; and also hastened his final deliverance, beyond expectation.

And now he is past all, at rest with Christ, and all the blessed : We see not them, but they see God, and God seeth us, and is preparing us for the same felicity : And if it be by the same means, and we must bear the Cross, and feel the *Thorn*, it will be wholesome and short, and good is the will and work of God. Lord, let me not account ease, honour or life dear to me, that I may finish my course with joy, and the Ministry received of the Lord, and come in season and peace to thee.

And is not this Providence of God, and this example of our deceased friend of use to us ? Yes, no doubt of manifold use.

I. It is of great use to all the Land, to good and bad, to observe Gods threatening in the removal of his servants: O how many excellent Christians and faithful Ministers of Christ, have been taken hence within a few months: The same week we hear of four or five more besides our brother, and some of them the most excellent useful men. And is it not time, 1. To repent of our neglect of such helps as God is now removing? 2. And to be presently awakened to use them better before the rest be taken away? Alas, poor Souls, what a case are you in, if you dye, or the word be taken from you, before you are regenerated and prepared for a better life! It is not so much their loss and hurt as yours, which Satan endeavoureth in silencing so many hundred such: And it is your heavy punishment more than theirs, which God inflicteth by their death. O speedily repent, before that death have stopp'd the mouths which call'd you to repentance. And it should awaken the best to prepare for death, and for publick suffering: It seems there is some great evil to come when God thus takes away the best. Yea, if it should be a forerunner of a better state, yet all save two of the old stock that dishonoured God in the Wilderness must fall, and it was by bloody Wars (a dreadful means) that *Joshua* and the new generation were to possess the Land of promise.

II. It is of use to us unworthy Ministers of Christ who yet survive. 1. It calleth loudly to us to work while it is day, for our night is near when we cannot work: Death will shortly silence us all more effectually, than men have done. Do Gods work prudently, do it patiently, peaceably, and in as much concord and true obedience as you can; But be sure you do it, whoever forbid it, or be against it, as long as God or your selves have not rendered you incapable. Whatever silencers say against it, Necessity is upon you: God calls for it: Souls call for it: The charge is dreadful, 2 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2. your Vows call for it: Satans malice, and the number of Soul-betrayers and murderers must provoke you: our time is short: Souls are precious: Christ the chief shepherd dearly purchased them, and will judge you according to your works: It will not justify your neglect to say, Men forbid me: Sufferings were prepared for me: Bishops and famous Divines wrote learned Books to prove that preaching was to me a

sin, and that I was bound to forbear it when forbidden.
 2. And it telleth us that we as well as others must prepare for the sharpest tryals from God. No thorn in the flesh so sharp and painful, which we may not feel. No death so violent or sudden but we may undergo. Love and hatred are not known by outward events, prosperity or adversity. A great difference *Solomon* acknowledgeth between the good and the bad, the righteous and wicked, him that sacrificeth (or worshippeth God) and him that doth not; him that sweareth (perjuriously or prophanely), and him that feareth (such) an Oath: some are loved of God, and some are hated: And this difference is manifest in such disposals, even of prosperity and adversity, as tend to their greater holiness and happiness, which shall manifest the difference fully and for ever. But outward events manifest it not in themselves: All such things come alike to all: yea, the Cross is more laid on the godly, than the wicked. O therefore away with the two Disciples desires of Church-preferment and worldly dignity, and prepare to drink of Christs Cup, and be baptized with his baptism, *Eccles.* 9. 1, 2, 3. *Matth.* 20. 22, 23. Learn daily how to bear slanders and persecutions from men, even from Christian Teachers; and how to lie in fleshly pains night and day, and how to die: and all this in faith, and peace, and joy, at least in the quiet hope of everlasting joy.

III. And without any disgracing or provoking design, but meerly in conscience and compassion to the Souls of the people, and of our Reverend Brethren themselves; I do humbly intreat the Right Reverend and Reverend Imposing Clergy, to lay by a while, if possible, all unrighteous prejudice and partiality, and worldly interests and respects, and consider that they also must die, and as they will stand to it at last, to resolve these Questions:

I. Whether those Terms of Church-Concord and Peace be wisely and justly made, which are too narrow to receive such men as this (for faith, knowledge, peaceableness, blamelessness, holiness, &c.) into the Ministry, Communion of their Church, or to endure them out of a Jayl? Whether wise and good men could find no better? And whether Christ ever directed the
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Church to exclude such, or did not plainly require the contrary? And whether the Apostles ever excluded such, or made such Rules?

II. Whether they think in their hearts that it were better all the good were undone, which hath been done by Nonconformists these 18 years to the Ministerial furthering of knowledge, repentance, holiness and salvation, than that such should have preached the Gospel when forbidden?

III. Whether it will be peace to your consciences at the Judgment of Christ, that any of you have furthered the silencing of such, and their other sufferings?

IV. Whether they that have written and preached against their Preaching, or for their silencing, and the execution of the Laws against them, or perswaded them to give over their work themselves, and reproached and accused them for doing it, be not engaged in this frightful Cause?

V. Is it not gross partiality, if you will cherish men of ignorance, vitiousness, or far less worth, while such as these are thought intollerable, meerly because the former are more obedient to you, than fear of sinning will suffer these to be.

VI. Was that Church therein guided by the Spirit of Christ, which made the Canon which *ipso facto* excommunicateth such?

VII. If you had known as many of the (about) 2000 silenced, and as well as I have done, how much of the grace of God shined in them, Is it possible that any man that hath the true fear and love of God, and sense of everlasting things, could ever by any pretences of Church-Government or Order, or upon any bias of interest, have consented to their silencing and sufferings?

Some will think that in partiality I over-magnifie men, because they were of my own mind and party: I have (besides some pious Women) written the Characters, and published the praises of divers; of Mr. Rich. Vines, Mr. John Faneway, Mr. Joseph Allen, Mr. Henry Stubbs, Mr. Wadsworth, and now Mr. John Corbet, and lately

lately one *Layman*, Alderman *Ashurst*; and he that hath now received them, whom such as you cast out or villified, knoweth that I have in knowledge of them, and love to Christ, whose grace shined in them, spoken simply the truth from my heart; and it is in a time and place where it is fully known, and feareth no confutation. And the History shall live to the shame of Church-dividing tearing principles, and all thorny hurtful dispositions, and to the encouragement of the faithful, and the imitation of those that in time to come, shall by faith, patience, and well-doing, seek for immortality and eternal life, by serving our Redeemer, and pleasing God.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Pag. 3. Line 26. for *great*, read *gentle*. Pag. 4. l. 1. for *our*, r. *one*. l. 34. for *grown*, r. *groan*. p. 5. l. 11. for *are sure*, r. *measure*. l. 37. after *that*, r. *the*.

HIS Writings published are,

1. His History of Col. *Maffy's* Military-Actions at and near *Glocester*.

2. The Interest of *England*, 1st and 2^d Part.

3. A Discourse of the Religion of *England*, asserting, That Reformed Christianity, settled in its due Latitude, is the Stability and Advancement of this Kingdom : In two Parts.

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What else may hereafter see the light, we yet know not.

Besides his Labour in Compiling Mr. *Rushworth's* first Volume of Historical Collections.